



Cities: Glossary of Terms

Ad Valorem (tax): Latin phrase meaning “to the value of” and used interchangeably with the term property tax; the largest tax source for city government in Florida.

Advisory Board: appointed by a city to advise a council on certain matters; usually composed of volunteer citizens.

Annexation: how a municipality expands its physical boundaries and how a property owner in the unincorporated area becomes part of an incorporated area; covered by Chapter 171, Florida Statutes.

Assessment: a fee placed upon property owners for an improvement specific to that property or area; can be paid with annual property tax bill or separately. Used for a variety of improvements.

Charter: the broad governing document for municipal governments (cities, towns and villages); adopted by the people and amended by the people through referendum. It is derived from the French word for “contract.” Every city in Florida has a charter.

Charter Officer: a position created and defined through a charter. Has legal standing because of placement in charter. (Example: the council or commission of a city are charter officers.)

City: municipal government; general-purpose local government created by the people to self-govern. Created through Chapter 165, Florida Statutes. (From the Greek, *civitas*, for citizen.)

Code: the body of ordinances for a city; often codified regularly to make sure all ordinances are non-conflicting with one another.

Commission: elected body of a municipal government.

Comprehensive Plan: required of the state, counties and municipalities in Florida; includes plans for development, land use, transportation and other factors to help plan for a 20-year cycle and to manage growth. Process amended in 2011.

Concurrency: state law requiring that infrastructure be in place before development occurs; features prominently in city comprehensive plans. Amended in 2011 to be a guideline for local governments, and no longer a law.

Council: the elected body of a city government (in Florida, there is occasional use of councilor, supervisor, trustee and alderman; but less commonly than council or commission).

Fee: a charge for service issued by a local government; adopted through an ordinance. It is voluntary in purpose, and proceeds must go to the service provided. Also called charge for service; user fee.

Growth Management: in Florida, a set of laws and policies in the 1970s to 2011 covering acceptable land use, conservation, development, zoning and other governmental regulation of growth. The 2011 law changes return most of this power and process to the city.

Home Rule: the Florida Constitution grants (1968) and the Florida Legislature upheld (1973) this power for city and county governments. It provides authority to adopt ordinances and enact programs without permission from the state, provided such ordinances do not conflict with state or federal law.

Incorporation: in government, used to describe creation of a municipality. The act of creating a city, town or village through referendum. Outlined in Chapter 165, Florida Statutes.



Infrastructure: the physical, man-made structures that support a service; i.e., pipes for water and sewer, water and wastewater treatment plants, paved roads, buildings and supportive systems for buildings, stormwater systems and parks.

Initiative: an effort placed before voters to amend a charter, ordinance or other legal action. Often defined in charter, or law, as to procedure; often requires gathering a set number of signatures to gain ballot access.

Intergovernmental: affecting one or more governments; overlapping goals of more than one government; coordinated activities of more than one government; shared sources of revenues among governments.

Interlocal: refers to action between two governments, usually as an agreement for service, an exchange of funding or other legally binding agreement.

Law: an enforceable action taken by government to restrict actions or set standards for compliance.

Ordinance: a legal action taken by a city government; often used to distinguish between state and federal laws.

Mandate: a legal action by a government requiring another level of government to do something; usually does not include funding (unfunded mandate).

Mayor: term used in municipal charters for the person on the council or commission who leads it; in certain charters, refers to a separate position, not on the council or commission, of someone who is the city's administrator. Usually refers to the elected leader of a municipal government.

Millage Rate: the tax levy enacted by a government, usually for the property tax. It is from the Latin for 1,000 (mill) and is multiplied by the appraised value of a property to create a taxable amount.

Municipal/Municipality: refers to city government; from the Latin "municipus" – many over the people. Used when you don't want to distinguish between city, town or village; also used legislatively to separate cities from counties.

Mutual Aid Agreement: interlocal agreement between and among governments to render assistance in disaster response and recovery

Place Name: used by planners to distinguish unincorporated areas known by local names (examples in Florida: Two Egg; Christmas); sometimes these are called communities.

Public Hearing: a noticed meeting (per statute and/or ordinance) relating to legal action by a government; usually requires that the public must be heard before action is taken.

Referendum: a vote held on a government action; usually set in state or city/county law.

Quasi-Judicial: refers to a city's responsibilities to act on land-use decisions as determined by the courts; this action is instead of a legislative act by a city prior to the 1980s cases that determined these actions to be judicial in nature and not legislative.

Resolution: when adopted by a city, this commemorative or expressive document has standing but is usually not legally binding in the manner of an ordinance, unless that city's charter provides for such powers.

Sunshine: shorthand for Florida's Open Meetings/Open Records Law; in Florida Constitution and Chapters 112 and 186, Florida Statutes. Applies to state in a limited capacity and to local governments in a very extensive capacity. ("All meetings are held in the sunshine.")

Tax: a mandatory payment from a citizen to a government; levied through the authority of a government. Rates are established by the government through either the state constitution or by government law.

Town: a municipal government; also used to describe unincorporated areas. (From the Old English – "lives within the walls.")

Unincorporated: land in a county that is not within the boundaries of a municipality. Often called by a locally known name but without a government.

Village: a municipal government; also used to describe unincorporated areas. (From the Latin, "villa, villaggio" – "place to dwell.")

Workshop: for local governments, a meeting at which issues are discussed without a vote. Under Florida's Sunshine Laws, this meeting is one of the most effective means of publicly discussing public business without taking action; by doing so, all members of the governing body know where one another stands on an issue.

Zoning: set of laws creating categories of land use within a city; used to separate areas by activity or use of property. (Example: commercial zoning; residential zoning; industrial zoning)



OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

County: substate; arm of the state. A unit of general-purpose local government created by the state to deliver state services.

School District: In Florida, this special-purpose district is created by the state to provide K-12 public education. School districts are funded through state and a required local effort, which is a levy of property tax set by the state and levied by the school district board of commissioners. In Florida, this district shares the same physical boundaries as a county.

Special District: created by the Legislature (independent) or a city or county (independent) to provide a single purpose in a specified area. Known as special-purpose local governments. (Examples: independent fire district; dependent downtown improvement authority.)

ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

CRA – Community Redevelopment Agency (also called Downtown Investment Authority, or DIA) – created by city or county, this governing body has special taxing authority for redevelopment and improvements to a blighted area. CRAs are dependent special districts

EOC – Emergency Operations Center – one statewide office and 67 county-based offices provide a centralized command center for disaster response and recovery

JPA – Joint Planning Agreement – used by counties and cities to set boundaries for service delivery and/or utility services

LPA – Local Planning Agency (local governments have them)

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization – a state designation of a state-coordinated advisory board that works with federal and state transportation planning (roads, airports, bridges, ports)

RPC – Regional Planning Councils (established regions in Florida for planning; there are 11 and cover all of the state). Advisory in nature but opinion is highly valued by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

TDC – Tourist Development Council – legislatively created districts that determine spending plans for tourist tax usage and advise counties and cities on tourism matters

TRIM – Truth in Millage – a Florida law requiring the publication of property tax information

WMD – Water Management District – state-created boards that issue consumptive use permits for water (agriculture, industrial, commercial, governmental)

FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE TERMS:

CB – Committee Bill – filed by the committee as a whole, not an individual member

CS – Committee Substitute – language is substituted for an existing bill

HB – House Bill – always an odd number

SB – Senate Bill – always an even number

TP – Temporarily Pass – when a bill appears to be failing, the sponsor can TP the bill to bring it back at a future date for consideration

